

Master's of Natural Resources Conservation: On-campus Residencies Frequently Asked Questions

Many prospective students considering the Master's in Natural Resources Conservation (MSNRC) at Paul Smith's College have questions about the residencies. While the residencies are intended as a dynamic foundation for student learning, they can present some complexity as students make their plans for graduate study. Paul Smith's College is committed to maximizing access and affordability of its programs so that all students who wish to participate can find ways to do so. We recognize that the on-campus residencies can pose barriers in terms of time and resources for some applicants and invite students to share any concerns with us early in the application process. Start with these FAQ, and then you are very welcome to reach out to the Graduate Studies Program Director and Admissions Director at gradschool@paulsmiths.edu with follow up concerns. We are here to help!

Why does the program include on campus residencies?

The MSNRC program is designed to balance ease of access for students studying from home and maintaining existing careers, with the hands-on, immersive, experiential educational approach that serves as the hallmark of Paul Smith's College's programs. In addition, the residencies give students a deep introduction to the distinctive Adirondack setting that informs much of the academic and ethical context of the program. Lastly, the three residencies establish and deepen relationships among students and faculty, forming the enduring network that extends student learning and which serves as a personal and professional asset for the each member of the community.

How long and when are the residencies?

The Master's of Natural Resources Conservation has three on-campus residencies. The first and longest is for two weeks in the summer, typically late June. This residency establishes a social and academic baseline for the rest of the program, creating learning experiences that are drawn upon and referred to by students and faculty throughout the program. Two, weekend-length residencies occur later in the program – one in December and the last in the second June, to provide milestones and focal points for the student and faculty learning community.

Are the three residencies required?

Our current policy is that the residencies are required, and that students need to work with their employers and families to plan for them. However, unforeseen events such as changes in health, work and family life do occur and we work with students in these circumstances. Students need to maintain open and timely lines of communication with their advisor and college administration to navigate such circumstances.

Do the residencies fit within the leave time policy of my present job?

The MSNRC residencies were designed to fit into the standard 2-week leave/vacation time convention in many workplaces. The long weekends run from Friday afternoons to Sunday mornings, sometimes requiring a day of travel on Thursday or an early start on Friday morning

for students who live within driving distance. While this plan might fit traditional job leave time policy, there are some occupations that have different degrees of flexibility. Prospective applicants are encouraged to discuss their ability to participate with the Graduate Studies Director.

Examples of how some students have found time for the residencies

Many of our graduate students have worked closely and partnered with their employers to participate in the Master's Program. Ideally, employers support graduate education because the employee will gain essential new skills that increase their value and impact in their careers.

Common approaches to the MSNRC leave time requirement:

- Discussing the residency requirement and establishing an understanding with your employer about leave time when you apply for the program
- Building the MSNRC program, especially the optional independent Final Project, into your job workflow. This is the best approach which *enables your employer to directly benefit from your studies*. Discuss this idea with the Graduate Studies Director.
- Using vacation time (first option)
- Taking unpaid time off
- Requesting a letter from the Graduate Studies Department explaining the residency requirement

Do students have to stay in the dormitories?

Graduate students who do not have local resident status are required to stay on-campus in college housing to maximize their learning, their opportunities for networking with other students and faculty, and to take advantage of the college's extraordinary facilities and setting.

Can students demonstrate local resident status and commute from their homes?

Students are welcome to apply for local resident status, which requires them to live full time within a one-hour (approximate) commuting distance. Students must document that they are in residence locally for at least one full semester (3 months). Short term rentals are not considered as establishing local resident status. Second home ownership in the Adirondack region may constitute local resident status for the purposes of housing during the on-campus residency. Students will not have to demonstrate 3-month residency if they or their family owns a local second home. The one-hour daily commute guideline applies. Contact the Graduate Studies Director for more information about this process. (gradschool@paulsmiths.edu)